1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

621 592 Going on to the marital status of the villagers, I found that the forty-eight households were to be classified as follows:

Monogynous	27	(including 7 at the school)
Widowers (all formerly monogynous)	3	(„ 1 „)
Widows	7	(„ 4 „)
Young (unmarried) man	1	(at the school)
Polygynous	10	
Total	48	

Whether a similar proportion of monogynous to polygynous households would also be found more widely among the Ovimbundu is a question which could only be settled by extensive 595 592 demographic studies.[1] My impression is that the proportion of polygynous to monogynous households is higher in the region of Kasonge than in other Umbundu areas for the following reasons:

1. The proximity of Kasonge to the Esele country which has long been a source of supply for concubines (slaves). (Five of the ten polygynous householders in Ngendo included at least one Esele concubine.)
2. The comparatively low bride-price in Kasonge as compared to other areas.

The South African Census for 1921 showed that at that time only one man in eight was polygynous.[2] My impression is that the proportion among the Ovimbundu is no greater and that economic factors will soon do away with any considerable polygyny.

In each of the ten polygynous households in Ngendo save one, there were only two wives or concubines. The one exception was

112 [1] The census of 1940 gives more reliable figures and more details than were previously available, but it does not provide a basis for studies of this order. The number or proportion of polygamous unions among the 'uncivilized population' was not recorded. For the whole colony, the division of the native population by sex is given as follows: males, 1,733,328, females, 1,932,501 (op. cit., vol. i, p. 78 f.); and for the Ovimbundu (*Mbundu*), as follows: males, 636,583, females, 694,504 (op. cit., vol. iii, p. 22 f.). Owing to the migration of labourers, and especially to the system known as 'contract labour', certain areas (of recruitment) show a large excess of females over males (as much as 4 to 1 in the 20–29 age-groups of certain areas), while certain (receiving) areas show a corresponding excess of males over females (4 to 1 in several areas and even 22 to 1 in one area, for the same age-groups) (op. cit., vol. iii, *passim*). On this subject, *vide* R. R. Kuczynski, *Colonial Population* (London, 1937), and *Population Movements* (ibid., 1936); both summarized in the *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, no. 2.

[2] Quoted by P. A. W. Cook, *The Education of a South African Tribe* (Cape Town; Juta, 1934), p. 3.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

the household of the headman Sikïlïlë, who had had four wives and one young Esele concubine. At the time of my last visit (1936), however, there were only two wives and the concubine, one wife having died, and another having gone to her people.

To complete the picture of the villagers, their numbers were as follows:

Village	*Men*	*Women*	*Children*		*Total*
			Male	*Female*	
In Sikïlïlë's village . .	24	35	31	37	127
In Ciyanda . . .	5	8	2	4	19
In Kanjengo . . .	3	6	3	1	13
At the School . . .	10	11	10	6	37
Total . . .	42	60	46	48	
	Adults: 102		Children: 94[1]		196

In Sikïlïlë's village there were domestic animals as follows: 9 head of cattle, 13 goats, 20 sheep, 100 pigs, and about 100 chickens. There was practically no professional specialization; there were almost no specialists living in the village: no blacksmith or carpenter, no mat-maker, but only one 'hunter of meat', and three 'hunters of (bee-) hives'. As to the women, all could make baskets, and there were several who had made pottery, but were not doing so at the time.

Pigs, chickens, and dogs roamed the village, functioning as a D.S.C. and a sewer system combined. Were it not for these scavengers the villages of the Ovimbundu would present an even more untidy spectacle than is the case. There is no other regular disposal of refuse, nor are there any latrines or privies.[2]

It will be seen that there is practically no division of labour as between households: each is practically a self-contained unit. The

[1] It was reported that in addition to the children then living, these same households had lost 57 by death (29 males and 28 females).

[2] At Ngendo the school village had two or three enclosed pit privies. The Umbundu euphemism for defecate, 'go to the bush' (*aku enda kusenge*), is revealing. Even more revealing is a proverb which advises one not to burn his bridges behind him, but literally it runs as follows:

Nda wa lisinga kuti, Ci endi kunyima ongo,
Nda o ka sïkïlï pi?

If you forswear yourself saying, I shall not go behind the house,
Then will you go (to) urinate where?

There is a more shocking version which, however, may not be really authentic.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

CHAPTER III

KINSHIP

The Household

592 THE basis of the village and of the whole Umbundu kinship structure is the household consisting of a man, his wife or wives and their children, together with such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached and live together in a single compound. The Umbundu word for the household is *ocikumba*, which includes domestic animals and possessions as well as the persons who make up the group, but nowadays this word is rarely, if ever, heard. The word *onjo*, which means 'house', is also used in the sense of household and to include the one or more 'houses' which a man has established by marriage. The housing arrangements of the household and its relation to the other households and to the headman of the village have been noted. The chief facts to remember are that each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself; and that the husband has no house of his own save a spirit hut (*etambo*), in case he is village headman or a family elder. There is not the same [595] relation between the rank of the wives and the position of their houses with relation to the cattle kraal, which is found among the cattle-raising Southern Bantu, nor are there the same distinctions of precedence. The eldest child (*ewãlã*) of his father, of whatever wife or concubine, takes precedence over all who are born later. It is nevertheless true among commoners that the first wife legally married is the chief wife. The number of persons belonging to a single household may vary greatly. Magyar stated that his father-in-law Kayaya Kayangula (king of Viye *c.* 1847–50) had seventeen sons and forty-four daughters.[1] Some recent kings have had as many as twelve wives and concubines, but I do not know of any having had even half as many children as Kayangula had. The only large household in the village of Ngendo was that of the headman, Sikĩlĩlĩ, with five wives and concubines, and fifteen children (most of whom were already grown at the time of my visits). The largest of the other households in that village had

[1] Magyar, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

593 only by a sister), and *mukãi* (sister, spoken only by a brother). In
[561] a polygynous household each of the wives is mother to all the children and each of the children is *hiva* or *manja*[1] to all the others.
848 Illegitimate children are not stigmatized but since they belong to
567 the mother they have a distinct designation.[2] Slaves or former slaves have a status within the household and village which to the ordinary observer does not differ from that of the children: they are treated much as the children and they may carry on in all matters social and economic much as though they were members of the family. I have noticed, however, that when there is a call for labour, the lot falls oftener to one of these 'children-born-by-day'[3] whether he was a war-captive or a pawn.

567 Both slavery and the polygynous household, two institutions
● 595 manifestly and intimately inter-related, are still a part of the
178 Umbundu social structure, but neither the one nor the other now has the importance which it formerly had. Neither of these institutions is part of the present and personal experience of the great majority of Umbundu households.

Kinship

596 *Blood Relatives* (*Epata*). The relationships of the wider kinship
602 groups are for the most part extensions of those of the household.
621 The child learns them very early in life owing to the fact that the village community into which he is born is only a part of this larger kinship group. Nearly all of the villagers belong to the same *epata* or extended family, which includes both lines of descent. Most of them belong to the father's family (*olusi*), and the mother's family (*olusia*) may also be represented. The fact is that most of the adults of the village are father or mother to nearly every child and most of the children are brothers or sisters. Those of his coevals who do not bear this relation to him are otherwise related and are also potential spouses or potential relatives-in-law.

[1] This distinction *yosipahai* (lit. '*of* the jealousy *of* women') may be made but it is not applied in ordinary speech.

[2] *Omõlũ a ngombe-la-ina* (lit. 'child *of* cows-with-mother').

[3] *Omõlũ-wa-vitima-hetanya*. Cf. 'child of my calves', Luganda expression and institution, L. P. Mair, *An African People in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1934), p. 32 f.

582 incest (*oku ndo*). But one may marry relatives of one's own age-level who belong to classes other than those mentioned, i.e. cross-cousins and, on other age-levels, father's sister or sister's daughter. It is said that formerly marriage never took place except between persons who could trace relationship in this way. Today this principle is very liberal in its application.(1) (It would be interesting to have estimates of the number of men who do marry first degree cross-cousins, father's sisters, or sister's daughters, as distinct from classificatory relatives of these classes, and the number who marry outside the *olusa* or *olusa*.)

583 Marriage was formerly arranged by the mother's brother (i.e. by the *olusa*), but today there is a tendency for fathers to arrange their daughters' marriages and to receive their marriage payment. (And also, occasionally, to assist their sons in providing marriage payment.)(2) *Ilombo*, or marriage payment, was formerly paid in cattle, blankets etc.(3) Today it is usually paid in cash, the amount being determined by the status of the bride.(4)

Polygyny

421 595 In the sample village (Ngendo, Rasongi chiefdom) described by Childs, of a total of 49 households,

(a) 10 households were polygynous; of these 9 contained only 2 wives or concubines, and the tenth, that of the headman, contained four wives and one concubine,

(b) 27 households were monogynous, and 3 more were occupied by widowers, all formerly monogynous. (The remaining households were occupied by 7 widows and one young unmarried man.)

Childs notes that the proportion of polygynous households in Rasongi chiefdom is probably higher than in other parts of Vinshundu country for two reasons: the comparatively low marriage-payment in Rasongi as compared with other areas, and the proximity of Rasongi to Esele country, which has long been a source of supply for slave concubines. (Of the 10 polygynous households in Ngendo 5 contained at least 1 Esele concubine.)(5)

Avoidance between in-laws

602 Mutual respect (*esumbilo*) between the two kin groups involved is considered a necessary basis for a successful marriage, and is the reason given for the various avoidances (*oku liyumbila*) enjoined upon the principals and their respective relatives. These avoidances may be summarised:-

593 (a) A husband and wife must avoid using each other's names.

601 (b) The term *mutetebo* is used for parents-in-law of either sex, and reciprocally for sons-in-law or daughters-in-law. The term is extended to all those whom one's spouse calls "mother", "father" or "child" (Childs, p.52) and apparently also to those whom one's spouse calls *sonu*, *tatebai* or

(1) Childs, p.54.
(2) Ponio, 1945.
(3) Cashmore, 1944, p.45.
(4) Childs, personal communication.
(5) Childs, page 50.

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ocimumbo (since Childs states (p.55) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) *Ndotembo* must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus *Nakombotia* and *Sakombotia* are the father and mother of Kambotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. *mai*, *tata*, *nonu* etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

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(c) The term *nonu* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nonu* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndotembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by .. a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after nine months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially .. to the *ndotembo* or *nonu* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect *(ocumbilo)*."(1)

A note on the kinship system

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There is a tendency today for the claims of the *olusa*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *olonu*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

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The "household", consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependents as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *onjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *olonu*, in which case he has a spirit-hut *(etambo)* in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 49 households only 10

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(1) Childs, p.32.
(2) Ibid., p.36; see also ibid. pp.79, 81, 89 etc.
(3) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.35-41.

were polygynous and only one of these contain more than two wives.(1)

The village or tabo (plural ovitabo) may consist of from 5 to 500 such households, the heads of which are usually related agnatically to each other. Most, but not all, of the larger villages are olombala (villages of chiefs or sub-chiefs). These are said to have had formerly as many as 5,000 inhabitants,(2) but today few have as many as 3,000, and there is a general tendency towards smaller villages and even isolated households.(3) There are in general two quite different types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. Those on the plains, where there is room to spread out, tend towards a circular shape, with the ocila and onjango (see below) near the centre. The various sections of the village may appear as quarters of a single whole, or they may be spread out haphazardly. Mountain villages(4) may have houses built on ledges almost one on top of the other. Here there is often no room or no suitable soil within the palisades for gardens or for the dancing-floor (ocila), which are found outside the palisade. Different sections of the village tend to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges.

The typical village of Ngendo described by Childs, in Kasongi chiefdom, etumbu (sub-chiefdom) of Ekango, is of an intermediate type, built on a slope. Ngendo has 196 inhabitants, of whom 42 are men, 60 are women, and 94 children. The village is divided into four smaller sections or wards (ovitwelo pl.), of which the largest, that of the village headman (ochulu) has 127 inhabitants, while the other three have 19, 13 and 37 inhabitants respectively. The word tabo (village) may also be used for either of the two larger sections by themselves. Each section has its own elder, but the dancing-floor (ocila), which is the centre of village life, is in the headman's section. The ocila is primarily a place for recreation, but religious functions also are held in it, and formal cases tried. Formerly most villages had a second communal building, the onjango or "Men's Club House"(5) whose importance was almost as great as that of the ocila. Here all the men, youths and boys gathered for the evening meal, and here guests were entertained, lesser judicial cases settled, and the day's work and gossip discussed, while young boys, sitting in the background, gained much of their knowledge of tribal history and custom.(6) Today the onjango exists and maintains its former function chiefly in parts of Ngalangi, Viye and possibly Ndulu. It does not exist in Childs' typical village, where the "Men's Club" holds only occasional meetings on the rocks behind the headman's house, and where the common evening meal no longer takes place. The reason suggested for the disappearance of the onjango is lack of leisure owing to demands for road work (in the immediate vicinity of Ngendo), for contract labour, involving absences of from six months to a year,(7) and the difficulty of securing tax-money.

(1) And polygyny is thought to be more frequent here than in other areas. See above, p.23.
(2) According to Magyar, 1851.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.35, fn.1. Childs does not suggest any reasons for this tendency.
(4) Formerly many villages were built on mountains for defence, and typical villages of this type may still be seen.
(5) The "Men's Club" seems to be simply a gathering of all the adult men (and possibly also the juveniles) of the village.
(6) Childs, op.cit.; Cashman, 1948; Bagshawe, (2) 1934.
(7) Most of the labour on the Benguella Railway is Umbundu, and many Ovimbundu travel to the Union of South Africa for work. (Childs, op.cit., p.35, et.al.)

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

302 [595] 171 hair into five high cones. Vachokue women mass their hair into separate balls shaped and held by clay and red coloring matter. I know of no hairdressing for Vachokue men, but ornamental wooden combs are sometimes used.

304 In only one place have I seen a nose pin worn, namely, the Esele country of Vila Nova de Selles. The fashion is out of date, but women of only twenty-five years of age have the septum of the nose bored; evidently the custom has not been obsolete for a long period (Plate LXXV, Fig. 1).

177 439 301 The most popular European importations are blue cloth with white spots, metal hair combs, beads, and bright metal crosses bearing a figure of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus. This ornament has penetrated to districts far away from Christian missions, and its wide dispersal shows that a newly introduced and attractive ornament from a foreign source may readily be accepted by tribes of different cultures.

517 301 There are interesting points of psychology in the attitude of the Ovimbundu toward European importations. Only a few patterns of cloth are favored, and there is no sale for any other design. Some designs are thought to be appropriate for young girls while others are favored by older women. The same may be said of colored beads, for whereas both blue and white beads are the usual decoration for young women and immature girls, red beads are worn chiefly by the elderly women.

178 A consideration of personal ornament establishes the general truth that in scarification, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, the use of red powder and grease, the anointing of the hair with palm oil, and the wearing of trade cloth, leather, or bark cloth, there is little exchange of styles. There are diffusions in language and other cultural traits, but decorative elements which have for a long period been regarded as distinctive of tribal life are rigidly preserved.

312 bananas, but one could not say that irrigation is generally practised, even when circumstances permit.

245 The papaya and the banana are increasingly cultivated, but they are by no means generally distributed. Here and there I [249] have seen a little sugar-cane cultivated by natives for their own [244] use. Near the main railway natives may be seen selling their products, which include cabbages and tomatoes. Some natives are today planting the guava tree which yields sweet palatable fruits. The fruits *olosia* are collected from the *usia* tree. When ripe, the fruit is yellow, round, and about two inches in diameter. These fruits are gathered in September, and the kernels, which are about the size of walnuts, are eaten uncooked. No fruits are collected for storage. *Olombala* fruits ripen in October, when they are eaten raw.

264 Each wife sends the food which she has cooked in her own kitchen to the *onjango* ("council house"). After carrying the food to this house of assembly, where the men meet each evening, the women return to their houses to eat alone, or with the young children.

343 252 [978] When there is a plurality of wives each has her own house and kitchen. Ngonga states that separate kitchens built outside the living houses are becoming more rare. The poor have their kitchens in the living room because they cannot provide separate structures for living and cooking.

264 262 252 The first meal is taken between five and six o'clock in the morning, the most usual food being meal sprinkled on boiling water to form a paste which is eaten with sweet potatoes. A mush of beans is eaten at night; generally there is no meal at midday. Three pounds of cooked beans are eaten by a person for one meal. Over the cooking pots leaves are placed to keep in the steam, especially when the pot contains sweet potatoes. I have made a meal from the sticky, gluey paste which results from sprinkling meal on boiling water. The chief objection to this food is the unpleasant quantity of grit in the meal, owing to the fact that it is pounded on the rocks. Manioc and sugar-cane are chewed at irregular intervals of the day.

262 The amount of meat consumed by the Ovimbundu is small in comparison with the quantity of vegetable food used. This adoption of diet of a particular kind is largely a matter of habit, and there is no good reason why meat should not form a larger proportion of the food supply. The Ovimbundu do not kill their cattle for food though they will eat the meat of oxen which have died from natural causes.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

of the girl by her husband, and if she were not a virgin he took a hot stick from the fire and burned a hole through her loin cloth. "The girl began to cry, but she had to take the burned cloth to her mother." In such an instance there does not seem to be an idea of guilt. The husband had accepted something that was damaged, and the payment of a pig by the girl's parents reunited the two young people. In former days, also at present, there are boy and girl companions who sleep together, supposedly without having sexual connections, although they may be seventeen years of age. The girl calls the boy *omboisi*, and he calls her by the same name. The Ovimbundu understand something of the physiology of conception; the woman is, however, regarded as only a receiving vessel. "The man puts something into her which grows." 585 [836] [842]

Husband and wife do not sleep in the same bed during the wife's menstrual period; the wife sleeps on a mat at the side of her husband's bed. A woman who is menstruating never cooks food, but women give mutual aid in this matter. A man with more than one wife sleeps either four nights or seven nights with each; the four-night cycle is more usual than the seven-night cycle among the Ovimbundu. Each wife has a separate hut and kitchen. There is no wife lending, but a visitor may be provided with a widow or even with an unmarried girl. Then the man would have to pay the woman. 841 595 837 [574]

Nganga was able to give information with regard to homosexuality. "There are men who want men, and women who want women." Nganga says he has heard people talk about it, and "they think this very bad." A woman has been known to make an artificial penis for use with another woman. The medicine-man will sometimes dress as a woman. Nganga, who has seen a man dress as a woman, stated that the man arranged his cloth like that of a woman, put palm oil on his hair, and joined the women to pound corn on the rocks. "The other people laughed and spoke bad words to him. His brother, father, and uncle beat him," but without producing reformation. 838

DIVORCE

There are many grounds on which a man may secure a divorce, but it does not follow that divorce is frequent. On the contrary the evidence indicates that the majority of difficulties are overcome by a compromise between the relations of the husband and those of the wife. The main causes of dissatisfaction with a wife are want of ability in cultivating her garden, physical weakness, a habit of thieving from the gardens of other women, incompetence in cooking, 586

3: Hambly . E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

586 bad temper, too much talking, some physical defect arising from childbirth, and infidelity. But the husband usually accepts payment from the adulterer, and in that event divorce is not sought.

585 586 If a mother has no milk, there is a likelihood that her children will die in infancy; this is a cause for divorce. Barrenness gives great dissatisfaction, but is not necessarily a cause for divorce. Usually the husband marries another girl, while the first wife retains her position as head-wife. With regard to frigidity my informant said [833] that sometimes "a married woman does not want her husband to do those things which husbands like to do, or she may want him very seldom." The husband is so angry that he may go away hunting for a long time. The husband may tell some old people, who talk to the girl. If his wife is a good cook, the husband may keep her and secure another girl as a second wife. Sometimes the husband ties the hands of the girl if she resists him. If a wife is returned to her parents on the grounds of her frigidity her husband does not receive compensatory payment, but he hopes that another man will take the girl and pay him for her.

842 Sterility of the male is sometimes suspected, in which case the husband tries another girl, possibly with his wife's consent. The wife may be allowed to have relations with another man in the hope of producing children. The evidence shows that there is definite experiment to test barrenness of the woman and sterility of the male.

In case of impotence (not sterility of the male sperm) the wife leaves her husband. In event of barrenness the woman visits a medicine-man, who gives her a charm consisting of two cowrie shells on a strip of leather which she wears round her neck; a potion also will be given her. If the barren condition is due to malevolence of spirits, the face of the woman is painted with streaks of red and white. Such a woman is said to gain *ocitumba*. *Tumba* means "a swell," "a rise."

586 [837] A woman may divorce her husband if he does not treat her well. If he beats her or refuses to give her cloth and palm oil, she will leave him; but she will not leave him if he is merely unfaithful. If a woman is unhappy with her husband, she will tell her people about the trouble. Her father and mother may say, "Go and try again."

After a year the woman may still be unhappy, in which case she goes to her parents. The husband visits his wife's parents to ask why she has left him. The parents give reasons and offer to return the token he presented for the girl. The return of the husband's tokens is usually long delayed because the parents of the girl are

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***Kukululu* or *sekululu*.** These terms are applicable to my father's father's brother, my father's father's brother's wife; my father's father's sister's husband; and my mother's father (the reciprocal *onekulu* describes the reciprocals, brother's son's son; husband's brother's son's son; wife's brother's son's son; daughter's son).

***Maikulu*.** This designation, which is derived from *mai*, meaning mother, and *kulu*, an old person, is applied to my father's mother (reciprocal, *onekulu yange*, son's son). *Maikulu* also means my father's father's sister; my mother's mother; my mother's mother's brother's wife; and my mother's mother's sister (the reciprocal is *onekulu* which equals the English reciprocals brother's son's son; daughter's son; husband's daughter's child; and sister's daughter's child).

This completes the second generation of ascendants.

NOTE: Ngonga's wife uses the names *maikulu* and *kukululu* for those relatives of her husband to whom Ngonga himself applies those terms. These relatives call Ngonga's wife *onekulu*.

TABLE D

(See Table E IV and V, also Table F II, IV and V)

SOME OF NGONGA'S DESCENDANTS

Nunulu* or *useli is my first-born son. Other sons are *omola*, meaning child. *Omola ulume* means a male child. *Omola ukai* is a female child. *Useli* also means a first daughter (the reciprocal for these terms is *tate*, meaning father).

Omolange means my child. I apply the word, not only to my own children, but to my elder brother's son (reciprocal, *tate*, father's younger brother); to my elder brother's daughter; and to my younger brother's son.

***Ndatembo*.** The word is applied to my son's wife; my daughter's husband; my elder brother's son's wife; my elder brother's daughter's husband; and my younger brother's son's wife (the same word *ndatembo* is used for the reciprocals of these terms; namely, husband's father; wife's father; husband's father's younger brother; wife's father's younger brother; and husband's father's elder brother).

601 The foregoing classificatory system of relationship is not peculiar
171 to the Ovimbundu, but is a cultural trait of many Bantu-speaking and some Sudanic-speaking Negroes. The similarity of the Umbundu system to those of surrounding peoples in Rhodesia and the Congo will be pointed out in chapters dealing with culture contacts.

591 When describing marriage rites reference was made to the fact
592 that a wife goes to live near her husband's relatives; the system is therefore patrilocal. The limited family consists of husband and wife (or wives) with their children. The greatest number of wives [595] observed in the family of a commoner was four, and in the family of a king eleven. A household sometimes contains adopted children, [597] also domestic slaves (pawns) who are working to pay off debts for [567] their maternal uncles. An extended family may include a grand- 596 father and his wife, his sons, their wives and children, and his unmarried daughters, with classes and nomenclatures mentioned in the foregoing tables.

613 The phrase *epata lia tate* (or *aluse*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *epata lia*

567 people, especially if they were from outside the Ovimbundu, was one of absolute and abject servitude.

The master had rights of punishment including a death sentence; but Ngonga says that a slave could appeal to the headman of the village if he were starved and cruelly treated. All children of a slave became slaves of the master. As the slave had no property he could not pay a fine; the master would pay the fine then relieve his feelings by beating the slave. Instead of paying the fine the master might sell the slave.

Slaves were not branded or marked in any way. Ngonga has seen runaway slaves hunted with dogs. A slave was not allowed to buy his own freedom. A master could dispose of his slave girls in marriage; for instance, a young girl might be sold to an old man. The condition of the slave is well expressed in Ngonga's own words: "The slave worked hard at everything, then the master said he had done nothing."

Slaves used to go to war to fight with their masters against an enemy. A slave might become a blacksmith or a hunter, two very esteemed occupations, but all his work would be for the master. Ngonga says there was no slave market belonging to the Ovimbundu, but every man knew where he could buy a slave. Slaves could act as witnesses in a trial. Slave women were not lent out for prostitution. A slave owner did not have promiscuous intercourse with his slave women, but he chose two or three girls as concubines. A slave girl who was married to a free man would revert to her master along with her children when her husband died. If a master had married his own slave woman she would, at his death, become the property of his eldest brother and her children would go with her. In some instances the slave woman and her children would be given to the son of her master's brother.

[585] [768]

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

361 When choosing a site for a new village, a preference is shown for a hillside, though woods or valleys are at times selected. The foot of cliffs is a favorite site. In addition to the shade afforded by the cliff there was in time past the advantage of being hidden from the view of enemies. Further shelter was afforded by the planting of wild fig trees. Sometimes an *ombala* ("capital") was rendered picturesque by the planting of trees which grow to a great size; such a plan was followed at the *ombala* of Ngalangi.

Caves in the wall of a cliff, likewise rugged hillsides, gave a place of retreat for women and children during an attack. Usually there

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

the custody of a widow. The father, the brother, or the maternal uncle of the widow may take her. In the words of my interpreter, each says, "It is better that you should take her," and at last someone says, "I will take her."

A chief of Ngalangi revealed the most important aspect of polygyny when he apologized for the fact that only five of his eleven wives were present. The chief was anxious to emphasize the fact that he had eleven wives, though six were at work in the fields.

When one considers the prestige of village chiefs, and further reflects on the desirability of maintaining this power within family groups, the institution of polygyny becomes more understandable. In addition there is the necessity of having women to cultivate the fields. A polygynous system does not necessarily cause domestic conflict, because each wife has her own hut, fireplace, and utensils. Custom obliges a chief to spend four nights in each hut in regular sequence.

A first and principal wife is not offended by the introduction of other wives, for these reduce her own labor and announce the fact that she is the principal wife of a wealthy man. When photographing the king of Ngalangi with his wives, I observed that he sent the principal wife from the group in order to adorn herself with a piece of cloth whose value was greater than that of the clothing worn by any of the others. Among the Vakuanyama it was noticeable that the principal wife wore a head-dress of clay with five horns; and in addition to this she had costly necklaces of ostrich-eggshell beads, also more of the coveted *omba* shells than were allowed to other wives. In this way the prestige of the first or great wife is preserved.

The persistence of custom, the force of education through suggestion in early years, and the power of social attitudes, are well illustrated by the survival of kinship terms and the classificatory system of relationships, with its marriage prohibitions and sanctions of an arbitrary kind. The strength of the mores and the fundamental nature of this system of relationship in determining marriage, descent, succession, and inheritance, are indicated by the fact that the system is unaltered after three centuries of contact with Europeans.

The rights of a mother's brother extend so far as a sale of his sister's children to redeem his own debts; and reciprocally he is responsible for the conduct of his sister's children, even to the extent of paying fines for the thefts they may commit. This prerogative and responsibility of the maternal uncle is fundamental, and around the trait cluster points of law and legal procedure.

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

containing the head and attaching it to a pole by which it was supported on the shoulders of two bearers. Then followed a series of questions from the village chief (sekulu), and answers were supposed to be given through forward or backward swinging of the pole. A forward swing was affirmative, and a backward swing was negative. I have seen this procedure followed with a coffin supported as described, and the questions related to the cause of death. 439 787

The head of a king would be asked, "Do you want an ox for sacrifice? We will give you one." "Do you want a new skin for your head? We will give you one." Such was the ceremony for bringing spiritual aid to what was otherwise a commercial undertaking.

A wooden figure of a female decorated with black feathers was an indispensable part of the equipment of a medicine-man who accompanied a caravan. When in doubt with regard to the path he knelt at the parting of the ways and consulted the figure. Replies came in a falsetto voice attained by plugging his nostrils. Horns containing a mixture of fat, charcoal, and other substances were carried so that they might be planted near a camping ground to drive away thieves and leopards. These horns are still used and are obtainable.

At the present day a belated Ocimbundu, who fears the sun may set before he reaches the next village, will take some earth from an ant hill. This earth he places in the fork of a tree saying, "O sun wait for me a little while." 789

Examination of the culture of the Ovimbundu, combined with observations on the Umbundu language and somatic traits, indicate that the Ovimbundu are a part of the Bantu peoples of southwest Africa. They have, however, taken advantage of the open Benguela highlands to develop their system of agriculture far beyond that which is usually carried on by Negroes in forest clearings. 101 241

In agricultural work a clear division of labor is observed. Men clear timber and burn the bush, after which hoe cultivation is in the hands of women, though men assist with the harvest. Unmarried girls help in the fields and each has a piece of ground whose products are the cultivator's personal property. This gives unmarried girls a measure of economic independence. Usually a girl spends the proceeds of her work in buying trinkets and palm-oil for personal decoration. Under their system of polygyny each wife has her own field, utensils, and a separate hut with its fire and cooking arrangements. The husband visits each hut for four consecutive nights, though in some districts there is a seven night cycle. Men always take evening meals in the mens' council house (onjango) in the center (to notice the tombs of hunters, which consist of cairns of stones enclosing a) 1/ 241 562 595 562

1/ [Printer's error: This sentance refers to p. 159. -- Analyst]

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

595 562 of the village. The meals are brought there by those wives who are at the time cohabiting with their husbands. But an exception is made in case of menstruation, for a woman is not allowed to cook or handle food during her period. At such times the preparation and transfer of food is carried out by another wife, and of course the time comes when such a service can be 241 requited. I found no survival of agricultural rites such as offering first fruits or other similar ceremony.

In some tribes of Sudanic and Bantu Negroes agricultural rites are important in relation to sowing and harvest, since land is in the first place the property of dead ancestors, but so far as my inquiries go such rites are not now known to the Ovimbundu. Maize may be pounded only on rocks that have been consecrated by the medicine-man: he kills a chicken and sprinkles [462 the surface of the rock with its blood. Only women may pound corn, and a 838] youth who persisted in dressing as a woman and pounding on the rocks was beaten by his relatives. This information gave a clue to homosexual practices, but the information obtained was meager.

231 In connection with the care of domestic animals many tempting digressions present themselves, but I am concerned only with beliefs, ritual, and division of labor. Chickens are of ritual importance since they provide the least expensive sacrifice, and in connection with industries the piacular use of chickens will presently be mentioned. For sacrificial purposes a goat is preferred to a sheep since it makes more noise; but the reason for this is not clear, though making a surmise I would say that the noise better appeases ancestral spirits to whom most sacrifices are made. Pigs are kept, but I did not hear of them being used for sacrifice. The animals so far mentioned have little or no attention. Goats fend entirely for themselves; so also do sheep. Chickens receive maize from women and children, who also gather the eggs. Pigs receive maize and mush from cooking pots or that discarded in making beer, but they depend largely on foraging in refuse pits.

The castration of pigs and bulls is the work of a male specialist who receives a fee of four yards of cloth for operating on the latter animal, but only a small gift of tobacco or similar recognition for castrating a pig.

The Ovimbundu have acquired cattle of the long-horned Damara breed, and in connection with the care of these some important points of ritual and division of labor should be recorded. The herding of cattle is [462] exclusively the work of males, and I am not aware that women have any 234 tasks connected with cattle. Only in recent times have some male owners of cattle begun to milk the cows. This they do somewhat stealthily, deceiving the cow from time to time by allowing the calf to suck for a few moments. If asked why milk is not used, the owners say that calves deprived of suck-

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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Marriages may also be ended by the wife leaving her husband. This may be the consequence of quarrels; however at times a woman may just run off without any apparent reason. Her husband may go to her kin and bring her back or may just get married again—such an episode may occur after many years of a marriage which has previously appeared happy. People who have been married previously can be married again according to the pattern described previously. Middle-aged and elderly people would leave out the festivities and would just have the meal together, or simply count themselves as married by the payment of the bridewealth.

There does exist a formal ceremony of divorce in which maize flour is smeared on the upper part of the face by the husband, and this will take place in the presence of representatives of the wife's kin. A man will do this when his wife has shown herself disrespectful to him or has quarrelled with his kin or her co-wife. As the Ovimbundu regard marriage as being for the procreation of children, a barren wife should be, they say, sent away but often in practice this is not done, if the wife is otherwise satisfactory.

Legally, the Portuguese administration recognizes both the customary marriage and the Catholic marriage ceremony. The Catholic missions report to the post people who, having been married in church, then make customary marriages, and these may be subjected to such sanctions as being sent to contract labour. The Protestant church marriages are not apparently legally recognized but they are subject to the authority of the Protestant church courts which grant divorces on certain grounds. The *chefe de posto* on his annual visit to take the check on the census may get angry with polygynists, but in fact no very effective administrative action exists with regard to indigenous marriage.

The motives given for polygynous marriage are the desire to have many children and (in the case of a chief) the need to have cooks to provide hospitality for guests. Large-scale polygyny is thought to be rather funny; I was told, as something amusing, that the former chief Mbati had 17 wives. Kafelo, the former chief of Gumba, had 6 wives, the highest number of continuing polygynous marriages I found. In Epalanga out of

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595 17 married men, 5 were polygynists. It is a common practice for a man with two wives to keep one in one village, another in another. Relations between co-wives are expected to be somewhat strained, as the very word for co-wife, *osepekai* (she of the jealousy of women) indicates. When I asked if a woman would help a co-wife who had run short of grain I was told that she would not help but would jeer at the other woman. There is no defined division of duties between wives in a polygynous household. It is interesting to note that the missions are not criticized for imposing monogamy—indeed the Catholic catechist of Epalanga thought he had found a good argument against the Protestants by accusing them sincerely but inaccurately of allowing polygynous marriages. The idea of Catholic marriage as indissoluble is difficult for many Ovimbundu converts.

592 While the most common form of household is that of the elementary family, the fact that not all widows or divorcées are absorbed into such households leads to the appearance of households under women heads of which there were 9 (out of a total of 36) in Epalanga. Such a household may be two- (mother, children) or three-generation groups (grandmother, daughter(s), grandchildren). Of these 9 households 2 were composed of a grandmother, who was effective head of the household, her children, and the children of a daughter; 1 was similarly composed but with the grandmother rather pushed into the background as in households with male heads; 3 were composed of women and their own child, or children; 1 was composed of a woman and a grandchild; and 2 consisted of women living alone. The adolescent sons of such a household will tend to become associated with the house of some male kinsman, probably a mother's brother. It is not always clear to what extent individuals associated with a particular household in fact participate in its activities. Thus it is not infrequent to find the elderly mother of the husband or wife living in a hut of her own behind the main hut or huts of the household, and in Epalanga there were four of these attached mothers. They do not exercise any authority over their sons, or sons-in-law.[19]

[19] Tumbu, the mother of Maria, the wife of Paulo (24), and of Jaime (19) lived in a hut near both households, and it would have been difficult to say to which she was attached, to her son's, or her son-in-law's.